[pronunciation](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/89/It-Leonardo_di_ser_Piero_da_Vinci.ogg" \o "It-Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci.ogg) ([help](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Media_help" \o "Wikipedia:Media help)·[info](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:It-Leonardo_di_ser_Piero_da_Vinci.ogg))) (April 15, 1452 – May 2, 1519, [Old Style](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Style)) was an [Italian Renaissance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Renaissance) [polymath](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymath): painter, sculptor, architect, musician, scientist, mathematician, engineer, inventor, anatomist, geologist, [cartographer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cartographer), [botanist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Botanist), and writer. His [genius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genius), perhaps more than that of any other figure, epitomized the Renaissance humanist ideal. Leonardo has often been described as the archetype of the [Renaissance Man](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymath), a man of "unquenchable curiosity" and "feverishly inventive imagination".[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci#cite_note-HG-1) He is widely considered to be one of the [greatest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greatness) painters of all time and perhaps the most diversely talented person ever to have lived.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci#cite_note-genius-2) According to art historian [Helen Gardner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_Gardner_%28art_historian%29), the scope and depth of his interests were without precedent and "his mind and personality seem to us superhuman, the man himself mysterious and remote".[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci#cite_note-HG-1) Marco Rosci states that while there is much speculation about Leonardo, his vision of the world is essentially logical rather than mysterious, and that the empirical methods he employed were unusual for his time.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci#cite_note-3)

Born [out of wedlock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Out_of_wedlock) to a [notary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Notary), Piero da Vinci, and a peasant woman, Caterina, at [Vinci](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vinci,_Italy) in the region of [Florence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florence), Leonardo was educated in the studio of the renowned Florentine painter, [Verrocchio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verrocchio). Much of his earlier working life was spent in the service of [Ludovico il Moro](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ludovico_il_Moro) in [Milan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milan). He later worked in [Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome), [Bologna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bologna) and [Venice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venice), and he spent his last years in France at the home awarded him by [Francis I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_I_of_France).

Leonardo was and is renowned[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci" \l "cite_note-genius-2) primarily as a painter. Among his works, the [*Mona Lisa*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mona_Lisa) is the most famous and most parodied portrait[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci#cite_note-4) and [*The Last Supper*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Supper_%28Leonardo_da_Vinci%29) the most reproduced religious painting of all time, with their fame approached only by [Michelangelo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo)'s [*The Creation of Adam*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Creation_of_Adam).[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci#cite_note-HG-1) Leonardo's drawing of the [*Vitruvian Man*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitruvian_Man) is also regarded as a [cultural icon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_icon),[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci" \l "cite_note-5) being reproduced on items as varied as the euro, textbooks, and T-shirts. Perhaps fifteen of his paintings survive, the small number because of his constant, and frequently disastrous, experimentation with new techniques, and his chronic procrastination.[[nb 2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_da_Vinci#cite_note-6) Nevertheless, these few works, together with his notebooks, which contain drawings, scientific diagrams, and his thoughts on the nature of painting, compose a contribution to later generations of artists rivalled only by that of his contemporary, [Michelangelo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michelangelo).

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